

REMARKS

Claims 1-9 were pending and considered. In an Office Action designated as Final, claims 1-9 were rejected. In response, a Request for Continued Examination has been filed, and this Amendment accompanies the Request. By way of this Amendment, claim 1 is amended and claim 5 is cancelled. Accordingly, upon entry of this amendment claims 1-4 and 6-9 will be pending. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

In the Final Office Action, previous rejections were withdrawn, and claims 1-9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over three newly cited references, U.S. Patent 4,224,372 (Romanski) in view of U.S. Patent 4,482,601 (Hartigan, Jr.) and U.S. Patent 4,351,874 (Kirby). In response, claim 1 has been amended. Accordingly, Applicant is of the opinion that claim 1 recites an invention not taught by the prior art and should be allowed. Claims 2-4 and 6-9 depend from claim 1 and should be allowed together with claim 1. However, for reasons to follow it is respectfully submitted that the dependent claims also are separately patentable for the novelty of the additional limitations recited therein.

The new primary reference, Romanski, teaches paper machine clothing which the Examiner states “is deemed to have a pair of longitudinal edge portions on the belt and a semi-permeable portion with a plurality of intercommunicating pores.” However, the Examiner has provided no explanation of why Romanski is “deemed to have a pair of longitudinal end portions” as recited in claim 1. Romanski has no apparent teaching relative to edge portions that are different from a semi-permeable center portion. Claim 1 has been amended to clearly recite distinctions between the edge portions and another portion of the belt between the edge portions. Claim 1 clearly recites the longitudinal edge portions to be “impermeable longitudinal edge

portions”. Claim 1 further recites a “semi-permeable portion” between the “impermeable longitudinal edge portions”.

Further, with respect to claim 1, the Examiner has referenced bits and pieces of information from three separate references without an adequate basis for combining the information to reject the claims. Claim 1 recites the membrane “having a thickness less than about 0.1 inches,” and “a total permeability greater than zero and less than about five CFM per square foot”. The Examiner suggests that Romanski has the same total permeability and refers to column 1, lines 59-64 of Romanski which states permeability “on the order of from 5 to 300 CFM/sq. ft. at ½” water”. Thus, rather than “greater than zero and less than about five CFM” as recited in pending claim 1, Romanski teaches permeability that is greater than 5 CFM and up to about 300 CFM. Romanski does not teach the same total permeability as claimed in the present application, but in contrast teaches permeability beginning at the maximum level recited in pending claim 1 and permeability significantly greater. Clearly, the permeability range taught by Romanski is not the same as that recited in claim 1.

The Examiner recognized that Romanski does not teach the thickness recited in claim 1. For this limitation the Examiner refers to Hartigan, Jr. and Kirby. However, the fabrics of Hartigan, Jr. and Kirby have significantly greater permeability than in the permeability range recited in claim 1. Table 1 in column 4 of Kirby teaches air permeability greater than 300 CFM when polyester stuffer yarn is used and greater than 180 CFM when black nylon stuffer yarn is used. The Examiner references column 7, lines 66-67 of Hartigan, Jr. which describes an example having a thickness of 0.079 inches and an air permeability of 9.4. Accordingly, none of the references teaches “total permeability greater than zero and less than about five CFM per square foot” as recited in claim 1, and no combination of references teaches the recited

permeability range of claim 1 in combination with “a thickness less than about 0.1 inches” as recited in claim 1.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the present invention recited in claim 1 is different from the teaching of the prior art alone or in any combination. An advantage of the present invention is that impermeable longitudinal edge portions form a seal over vented parts of a roll thereby allowing formation of a sealed chamber acting on a sheet being processed on the membrane. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 1 should be allowed. Reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

Claims 2-4 and 6-9 depend either directly or indirectly from claim 1 and include all of the limitations of claim 1 while adding further specificity to the invention recited therein. Claims 2-4 and 6-9 should be allowed for that reason alone. However, it is respectfully submitted that at least some of the dependent claims recite additional features not taught by the prior art and are separately patentable from claim 1.

The Examiner has referred to column 4, lines 3-9 of Romanski with respect to claim 2. However nothing in Romanski appears to teach the low permeability recited in claim 1, let alone the even lower permeability range recited in claim 2. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claim 2 should be allowed for the additional features recited therein.

With respect to claim 4, the Examiner states that the shape of the edge portion is “an obvious matter of design choice” which “would have involved a mere change in size of the membrane”. However, this bare assertion by the Examiner is not supported by the teaching of Romanski which does not appear to teach any shape variation along the sides of the fabric in addition to failing to teach even the existence of edge portions as recited in the pending claims. The structure recited in claim 4 provides advantages in sealing the edge portions over vented parts

of a roll, allowing formation of a sealed chamber acting on a sheet processed on the membrane. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that claim 4 should be allowed for the novelty of the specific features recited therein.

It is further submitted that the Examiner's stated reasons with respect to the rejections of claims 6, 7 and 8 are similarly unclear and/or unsupported by the sections of the references to which the Examiner refers. For claim 6, the Examiner refers to a "foamable composition" in column 3, line 29 of Romanski. For claim 7, the Examiner refers to a "fabric" in column 2, line 46; and for claim 8 the Examiner refers to Romanski's statement of a "formed fabric" in column 2, lines 44-62. It is not clear how these descriptions in the reference meet the limitations recited in the claims.

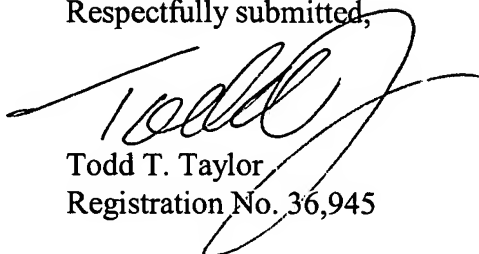
With respect to claim 9, the Examiner's argument relies on the earlier unsupported assumptions with respect to claim 1.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant submits that no combination of the cited references teaches, discloses or suggests the subject matter of the amended claims. The pending claims are therefore in condition for allowance, and Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of all rejections and allowance of the claims.

In the event Applicant has overlooked the need for an extension of time, an additional extension of time, payment of fee, or additional payment of fee, Applicant hereby conditionally petition therefor and authorize that any charges be made to Deposit Account No. 20-0095, TAYLOR & AUST, P.C.

Should any question concerning any of the foregoing arise, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (260) 897-3400.

Respectfully submitted,



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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: MS Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on: January 18, 2006.

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